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## Zip Code Project – Assisting Disconnected Youth

### **Request:**

The Arizona Department of Education (Department) requests \$350,000 annually, beginning in FY18, to establish the Zip Code Project Division to address statewide problems concerning disconnected youth and school dropouts.

### **Background:**

A.R.S. § 15-251 obligates the Superintendent of Public Instruction to direct the work and performance executive, administrative or ministerial functions by the department of education or divisions or employees thereof. To withhold this statutory obligation, the Superintendent of Public Instruction creates divisions to execute the Department mission to serve Arizona's education community, ensuring every child has access to an excellent education.

Statewide statistics for student dropout rates and disconnected youth suggest the need to address these issues. Disconnected youth are young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are not working nor are attending school<sup>1</sup>. In the metro areas of Phoenix and Tucson, nearly one in five young people are considered disconnected<sup>2</sup>. Each disconnected youth is missing out on over \$695,100 over their lifetime due to decreased earnings and increased public and private expenses for health, crime and welfare<sup>3</sup>. Arizona has over 183,000 disconnected youth which equates to \$127.3 billion in lifetime economic loss<sup>2</sup>. The Arizona Mayor's Education Roundtable has reported that the state and local governments are losing \$1.5 billion in lost tax revenues and increased welfare costs for the more than 18,000 youth who failed to graduate in 2012<sup>2</sup>. According to Measure of America research, not only are disconnected youth suffering financial losses, they are dealing with increased likelihood of chronic unemployment later in life<sup>3</sup>. This research shows that labor force participation is important for reasons beyond earning a paycheck<sup>3</sup>. Employment matters for topics such as social inclusion, self-reliance and a sense of purpose, and has tangible advantages for physical and psychological health<sup>3</sup>. Youth whose parents lacked a high school diploma had higher rates of disconnection by 40%<sup>1</sup>. The Superintendent of Public Instruction established the Zip Code Project to address dropout prevention and disconnected youth by targeting high-need areas.

### **Justification:**

The Department requests \$350,000 annually, beginning in FY18 to create a division to address the growing statewide problem of high disconnected youth and dropout rates. The Zip Code Project Division within the Department will have four dedicated FTE to generate solutions for the high-need communities identified as having high youth disconnection and dropout rates.

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<sup>1</sup> Hair, E. C., Moore, K. A., Ling, T. J., McPhee-Baker, C., & Brown, B. V. (2009, July). Child Trends Research Brief. Retrieved October, 2015, from <http://www.childtrends.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Arizona Mayors Education and Economy Profiles. (2014). Retrieved August, 2016, from [www.azmayors.org](http://www.azmayors.org)

<sup>3</sup> Tung, D., Guyer, P. N., Subramani, S., & Bennett, N. (2012, September). One in Seven: Ranking Disconnection in the 25 Largest Metro Areas. Retrieved October, 2015, from [www.measureofamerica.org](http://www.measureofamerica.org)

For the first cohort, the Zip Code Project has selected four high need areas to begin. The initial criteria included provisions such as at least one zip code had to be in a high-density Native American community, at least one rural zip code, and two or more urban communities. In the Chinle and Ganado regions in north eastern Arizona, the zip code 86503 was selected for the high-need Native American population. The rural community of the zip code



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85321, which surrounds the town of Ajo, was selected. Two zip codes in the urban areas of South and West Phoenix were selected, 85040 and 85031 respectively. In order to effectively assist in the reconnection and prevention of the disconnected youth in Arizona, the Department requests funds to support the project and expand to additional high-needs areas.

This Department request is necessary to make education an accessible priority for the 150,000 youth that are suffering from lack of education and career opportunities. Each community in Arizona has a different set of needs, and working with each community at their local level, will ultimately bring the greatest amount of positive change in the lives of these disconnected and often forgotten youth.

The Zip Code Project within the Department will:

- Work with high-need communities across the state to address the disconnected youth crisis.
- Develop sustainable, high-quality and strong partnerships with community-based organizations around the state.
- Work in tandem with our partners to address the youth disconnection issues specific to the communities identified.
- Provide information, resources and technical assistance for Local Education Agencies and families, which would include:
  - Youth disconnection prevention which includes heavy focus on dropout prevention and alternative pathways to completing high school
  - Educational materials to help the public understand disconnected youth
  - Providing assistance aligning curriculum and instruction with new or revised Arizona standards.
- Expand the scope of the project to include additional high-need areas.
  - With adequate funding, the Department anticipates the addition of two to three zip codes per fiscal year

The requested funds of \$350,000 annually allows the Superintendent of Public Instruction to carry out the statutory duties to achieve the state's educational and economic objectives.

### Operations Cost

|                                  |                  |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| FTEs:                            | 4.0 FTE          |
| PERSONAL SERVICES:               | \$200,000        |
| ERE:                             | \$70,000         |
| PROFESSIONAL & OUTSIDE SERVICES: | \$29,000         |
| TRAVEL:                          | \$10,000         |
| OPERATING:                       | \$41,000         |
| <b>TOTAL:</b>                    | <b>\$350,000</b> |